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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 008618

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [AL](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT-DEMARCHE ON PREPARATIONS FOR ARAB LEAGUE  
IRAQ RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 207928

Classified by Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone 1.4(b) and  
(d).

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Summary  
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1. (C) In a meeting with Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa and his Chief of Cabinet Hesham Youssef on November 15, the Ambassador delivered the points in reftel and received a brief on the status of preparations for the proposed November 19 Iraq conference. Moussa said: 50-60 Iraqis received invitations; only Iraqis and certain League representatives will join the substantive sessions; the conference will not discredit or contradict the process outlined in UNSC 1546; rather it will aim to draw more Iraqis into the coming elections and subsequent constitutional process; Iraqis will discuss withdrawal of the MNF-I, but will not set a timeline and the conference will focus on reconciliation and promoting broad political participation. End summary.

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The demarche and Moussa's Response  
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2. (C) During his November 15 meeting with Arab League SYG Moussa, the Ambassador conveyed reftel concerns about the proposed November 19 preparatory conference on Iraq. The Ambassador stressed, in particular, the need for the AL initiative to accept and endorse the Iraqi process established under the UNSC resolutions 1546 and 1637 and refrain from opening any discussions that might discredit, contradict, or question those resolutions or the legitimate political process. The Ambassador also underlined the importance of urging full participation in the upcoming elections and avoiding attempts at setting "timelines."

3. (C) Moussa sought emphatically to put to rest concerns that the November 19 conference might undermine the ongoing political process under the UNSCRs. He said that the League will not oppose or challenge the existing process, and instead will press for reconciliation and to draw more Iraqis into participating in the December 15 elections and the subsequent Iraqi political process, as provided in the Iraqi constitution, for amending the constitution. He maintained, however, that the League's initiative "has a role and will continue to have a role." He envisioned that the Arab League's conference, though its Cairo session would last only three days, "would not close but rather would move to Iraq after the elections," as a continuing endeavor. Moussa rejected the suggestion that the League risked "internationalizing" the conference by inviting so many groups to join the opening ceremonies. He said that international support is important to and gives weight to the process. He clarified that no one except the Iraqi delegates and certain League (and UN) representatives would attend substantive meetings, probably representatives of the Arab League "Committee of Eight." He tried to recall which these were: Egypt, Saudi, Kuwait, Bahrain, Syria, Sudan, Jordan, Algeria. On November 19, all outsiders would participate in the opening ceremonies, including a statement by himself and speeches by Iraqis. If Bouteflika attends, he would speak. In that case, Mubarak would also attend and speak. The session would start by 1100 a.m., and by 1300 they will leave the Iraqis to their work, Moussa explained. Moussa said the League does not want to "corner" the U.S. on its role in Iraq. Rather, the Arab League wants to help the different political groups overcome the deep lack of confidence between them.

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Participation: inaugural vs. substantive sessions  
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4. (C) Moussa said that he had invited a broad group of guests, including many GOI officials, four Iraqi women (the Iraqis themselves had included not a single woman), Algerian President Bouteflika, many Arab Foreign Ministers, representatives from the Arab Committee of Eight, the Islamic Conference, the EU, P-5 nations, and Turkey, Syria, Algeria, and Iran, to the inaugural session of the Iraq conference. Some of the prominent Iraqis include: President Talibani,

Prime Minister Jafari, Ayad Alawi, Sandari, Rubaie, Abdel Azziz al Hakim (who phoned Moussa during the Ambassador's meeting, and reportedly was "still thinking about attending."), Adnan al Pachachi, and Moqtadr Al Sadr. Moussa said the Iraqi Minister of Transportation will represent Moqtadr Al Sadr. Moussa said he wanted the participation at the inaugural session to be broad in order to give the conference weight.

15. (C) Participation during the substantive portion of the conference, Moussa underlined, would be restricted. He said the League invited 56-60 Iraqis for the substantive portion of the conference. Only these delegates and certain AL officials, including the SYG, and former Sudanese FM Ismail will be able to participate in the working meetings. The Arab League officials would "stand back and let the Iraqis do all the talking," but they would aim to facilitate as possible. Although some GOI officials were invited to the inaugural session, Moussa said that only those officials chosen as their political group's "delegate" would be welcome at working sessions. Moussa also noted that he would not require that he (or his representatives) participate in all of the working sessions. Moussa promised to send us a list of invitees. He will also update us on participation as soon as he receives names of firm attendees.

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Conference agenda  
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16. (C) Moussa said that he intentionally refrained from setting the agenda or drafting any language for use during the working sessions. Explaining that he wants the Iraqis to focus on reconciliation, Moussa said that, to the extent possible, he will leave it to the Iraqis to direct the conference. Moussa's Chief of Cabinet Hesham Youssef said that the objectives of the conference are to determine: when and where the next session will occur, who will participate or, at a minimum, what mechanism will determine participation, and the agenda. In addition, Moussa noted, the participants will discuss the importance of political participation and Iraqi unity, and the question of "foreign forces". Moussa pledged that there would be no effort to fix a timeline for MNF-I withdrawal. When the Ambassador again flagged the danger of deviating from the language of UNSC 1637, Moussa said that even the Sunnis now favor only gradual withdrawal of MNF-I. The emphatically warned against any attempt to use the term "foreign forces" to even appear to refer to both MNF-I and foreign terrorists on even a remotely similar footing. This would be a red line for us. Moussa affirmed there would be no such references.

RICCIARDONE